

# Element of History Pieced Together

## BOOK REVIEW

Nishacharer Nishidin  
by Abdur Rahim

Published by: Nani Prakashani, Gulshan, Dhaka  
pp 234 Price Taka 150

JOURNALISTS do not write history. In the process of reporting about events, which later become part of history, they piece together elements of history. Abdur Rahim, a senior journalist of the country, has successfully done that job.

His premier publication, entitled *Nishacharer Nishidin*, is a compilation of columns he once wrote for the leading daily of the country. These are not hard reports and to be precise can be termed news behind the news, a commonly used word in journalistic parlance.

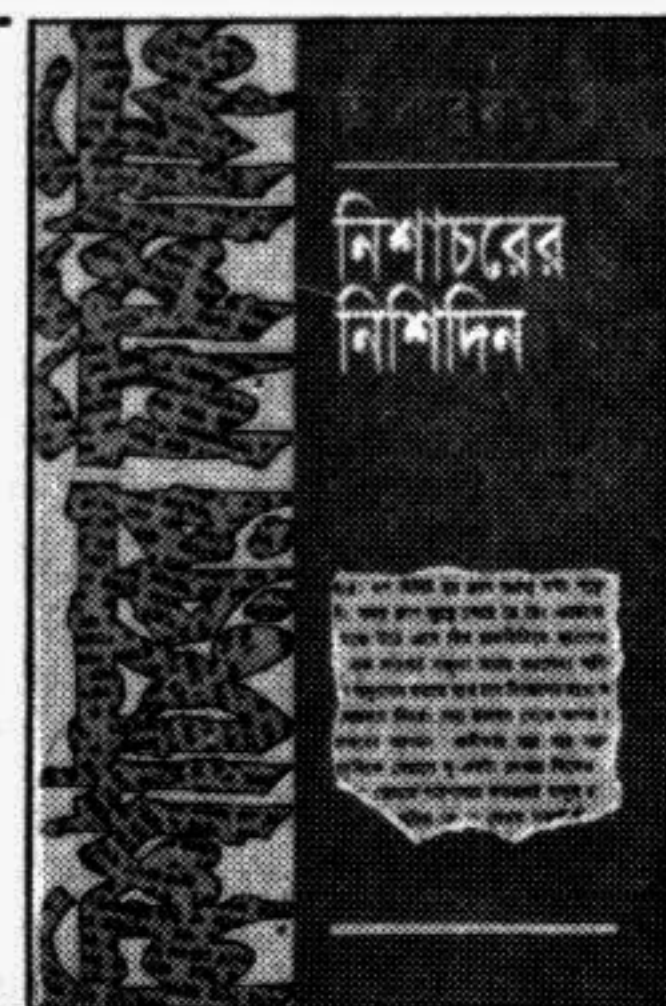
The events cover some decades of our socio-economic and political history which the writer covered as an active journalist. One feels envious of the privileges he had in witnessing those events of our history. But he has difference with other working journalists. While most fail to record these events for posterity, Rahim has not failed in his responsibility.

From personal experiences to incidents of political significance, everything has come up as contents of the book. The insight, humour he has used in writing these pieces have made the book worth reading. Besides, he has related almost every piece with either an anecdote or a quotation from some of the leading celebrities. Some of those are very appropriate. However, in the process he could not hide his po-

litical belief. Reading between the lines a careful reader would discover in the writer a man with strong sense of nationalism and belief in progressive ideas. The writer did not compile the pieces in order of time as those were printed, nor did he explain why he had to change the order. It would have been better if he could maintain the order as these were printed.

The book, despite some of the criticisms, will be considered a big contribution to the history of this country. But it would be advisable if the writer makes corrections of some of the factual mistakes before its second printing. To mention a few, the cyclone of 1970 hit the coastal areas on November 12, not November 11, and declarations of newspapers were annulled in 1975, not 1974 and so on.

Before going into the contents, it would be fair to discuss the other aspects of the book. Some printing mistakes which have crept into the book



have compromised its quality, especially in the mini foreword the author has written for the book. In addition, it is difficult to understand why all the pieces do not carry the date-line as to their first date of publication. Also, it would have been better if the writer could allow an editor to prepare the manuscript before publication,

because in that case some redundancies could be struck out. He may have differing views but some of the sentences, which were used may be to dramatise the beginning of a piece, sound meaningless (like the one on page 130).

This is important for other reasons too. When the pieces were being published as columns, readers were in a position to maintain the chronology. But for a reader of today or tomorrow, it becomes difficult to maintain the linkage (like the one on page 175 and the other on page 177).

Nevertheless, such holes are plugged in by the drama of the incidents recorded. But in some places the attempt to theorise some ideas are not very effective. Could it be for the reason that at the time of writing the author had no subject or incident in mind to recreate (like the one on page 180).

Brushing aside all the criticisms, the book is an important contribution to our existing political literature and excels in its own right.

Last but not the least. The quality of printing could be improved further and the cover could be made more colourful and thematic.

Reviewed by  
Mahfuz Ullah

# The Statue of Lenin

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"bourgeois" party would be against its founding principals and though rejecting the de-Stalinisation process set in motion in the Soviet Union by Nikita Khrushchev, ended up supporting the Chinese form of communism.

Proof of this ideological bonding came decades later when the CPM Politburo tacitly supported the military repression of the Tiananmen Square

demonstrations in China in 1989, by simply not condemning them.

And though the CPM accepted the need for glasnost (openness) and perestroika (restructuring) in the former Soviet Union, it wanted both concepts to be implemented within a Marxist framework.

The CPI, on the other hand, bolstered succeeding Congress governments till it earned itself the opprobrium of sup-

porting Prime Minister Indira Gandhi after she imposed a State of Emergency in 1975 when faced with impeachment for resorting to unfair electoral practices. Ever since, the CPI has been trying to purge itself of this "blot".

Over the past decade, particularly since 1990, there has been talks of unifying the two communist parties, but the CPM has opposed it. However, there is general agreement between them on the need to present a united front on the ground on broad policy issues such as opposition to the gov-

ernment's free market policies and the communal activities of the fundamentalist Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party.

Other political parties are advising the leftists to proceed with caution. They see the break-up of the Soviet Union and the fall of communism as an opportunity for leftists to learn from their mistakes and use their disciplined cadres to join the national political mainstream at a more "realistic" and "useful" level.

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# Polygamy Outlives

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cies of the Nkrumahs, Nyereres and Kaundas made leftism largely unappealing to the majority of Africans who, with some justification, equated leftism with dictatorship.

Even then, some in Africa were still willing to give the left a second chance. And so came a new generation of left-leaders in the 1970s and 1980s.

Among them were Mengistu Haile Mariam of Ethiopia, Jerry Rawlings of Ghana, Thomas Sankara of Burkina Faso, Samora Machel of Mozambique and Jose Eduardo dos Santos of Angola.

Some of these leaders confused Africa's strong sense of community with socialism, even communism.

Africans generally are communalists, not communists. Although traditionally they like to live and do things together, they cherish their individual independence.

They want their own farms, and the right to decide what to plant, when and how to sell their produce, for what price and to whom.

Being ordered about by a central committee or a politburo is not to their taste, which is why Nkrumah and other leftist presidents had to resort to dictatorship to survive.

In addition to political difficulties, the extremely bad performance of African economies forced leaders such as Ghana's Jerry Rawlings into the em-

brace of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, capitalist institutions with no sympathy for leftist ideals.

The hardships caused by the IMF and World Bank prescriptions might have produced a resurgence of leftist thinking, except that it coincided with Soviet disintegration, leaving the impression that there was no alternative to the free market.

In addition, Moscow's role as a provider for its favoured friends came to an abrupt end as it discovered that it had no money to spend. Moscow could not even support Angola and Ethiopia, its most devoted protégés.

And along with all the other problems facing newly-independent states, leftist leaders in the south of the continent also had to contend with ruth-

less military de-stabilisation by South Africa.

The final ingredient in the brew was the disenchantment felt by thousands of African students studying in Soviet institutions. The main aim of the programme was to influence African students to carry the leftist flag when they returned home.

But the longer they studied in the Soviet Union, the more anti-communist they became. They saw in living colour the extent to which the system failed to live up to its rhetoric. They learned to hate communism even before they finished their studies. On their return home, they gave another push to the anti-socialist bandwagon then gathering momentum.

Africans are generally long-suffering, slow to anger. But they are nobody's fools. If leftism could not save Ghana, Tanzania, Angola, Ethiopia or Mozambique, how could the future lie with the left?

So the collapse of the Soviet empire was merely the icing on the cake. The demise of the African left was well underway and the fall of the Berlin Wall only drove the nails in the coffin.

The field has been left to a core of activists — mostly university students and lecturers — who mouth old slogans and live like ostriches. They lack even the money and resources to fight for their cause.

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## ANCIENT CHURCH RESTORED

Tucked away in the heart of the City of London, dwarfed by tall modern buildings, is a tiny church dating back to the 12th century.

St Andrews Undershaft has recently undergone extensive refurbishment which has included restoration of several historic and beautiful stained glass windows. This delicate and intricate work has been carried out by a company in the East End of London that has been specialising in this type of work for 125 years.

Here, an expert craftsman from Goddard and Gibbs closely examines a panel needing renovation. Behind him is a window that has just been fully restored and replaced.

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# Towards True Enlightenment in Practice of Islam

## BOOK REVIEW

Eid Miladunnabi : Alor Pathey

Edited by Khwaja Qamrul Haq and Abdul Hannan Thakur

Published by Bangla Academy, Dhaka  
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bling and the use of intoxicants. He abolished infanticide, discouraged slavery and proclaimed the intrinsic brotherhood and equality of every human being in the eye of Allah, irrespective of race and class.

This book — an anthology of five articles on prophet Muhammad (SM) in different fields and eight poems by four lauded poets, is all the way interesting and timely. The articles will be able to chisel out the yawning gap — to the readers — between the true awareness of Islam and its present practice by the followers in this Muslim-majority Bangladesh. The practitioners of Islam in Bangladesh nowadays seem to forget the real sense of the first ever eminent message: "Read, in the name of Allah Who created (96:1-2)." "Read" is not meant for paltry reciting, it is — "conceiving" deep inside the soul using the conscious intellect.

In a country of thousands of mosques where millions of

people are supposed to be religious, in the very sense of the term, yet there are corruption, terrorism, killing, selfishness and falsity. *Alor Pathey* will make the readers realise the lacunae of being carried away from the dogma of Muhammad (SM). Leo Tolstoy comprehended it and said: "If that is Islam, then I am a Muslim." Well, like above, an array of comments of prominent foreign and non-Muslim personalities make the book more optimistic.

Muhammad (SM) foresaw the current century's science and humanism 1400 years earlier. He knew about the hidden traits of the recessive genes. He, with a nagging confidence, insisted on planting trees. It wouldn't be unfair to say — in the context of today's global warming — that he was the father-ecologist. Likewise the present US Senator Harkin's Bill on Human Rights was called upon by Muhammad (SM) while he was preaching

out the humanistic values.

*Alor Pathey* ends with the poems of Asad Chowdhury and Mohammad Nurul Huda. Chowdhury's poem is a sort of prosaic confession.

The entire production of the book must be commended. There is hardly any misprint or spelling error. In this respect, the two editors Khwaja Qamrul Haq and Abdul Hannan Thakur must deserve credit. Anyway, thanks to Bangla Academy for publishing such a book and making it available, at a comparatively cheaper price.

Reviewed by  
Yousuf Jamil

# Tele-View

by Kaiser Parvez Ali

THE commercials telecast by BTV perhaps make an issue to be discussed. They are of two types generally, good and bad. The good ones, many of which are understandably shot abroad, are with superior quality photography taken from suitable angles, perfect editing, and the message transmitted to the viewers speaking for itself: one does not feel irritated, or the urge to switch off the TV set. In this category falls the commercials on various brands of tooth pastes, toilet soaps, etc.

On the other hand there are some commercials telecast by BTV which are of inferior quality, with poor photographic techniques and messages as absurd and embarrassing that go beyond logic and common sense.

Let us review some of these commercials. If we begin with the ones on saris, then there is one which shows a number of ladies wearing colorful saris singing songs and making all types of alluring, provocative and suggestive gestures with their hands above their shoulders as if they are playing some instruments with their hands. The physical gestures at times are embarrassing and often makes it difficult to sit and watch with members of the family. Another sari ad has two models — one receives a letter, the other tries to grab it from her and in slow motion they come downstairs one chasing the other, finally they sit on a sofa and together read the letter. From this ad the viewer could get the impression that the ad focuses on the interior design, floors, and the furniture. The third one has a middle-aged model with severe memory problem — right from his residence his wife tells him to bring a particular brand of sari prior to his departure for work. On the way to his office he is reminded on the bus by a passenger, his boss reminds him at office, and finally the rickshaw puller. And it is at this point he realizes that his clever wife had a placard pasted on his back. Now if the memory of this guy is so bad,

then one may feel he better stay at home because today he is forgetting something at home, tomorrow he will forget something at his workplace. This sort of advertisements reflect poor taste. Then we have some commercials on 'lungis' telecast by BTV. A guy purchases a particular brand of lungi and lies on the couch stating that donning the lungi is so comfortable that it makes him sleepy. The impression is that it is the couch and not the lungi which makes him sleepy. Another latest advertisement on lungi has the male model coming to his wife and giving point by point explanation, sort of defending himself, as to why he had purchased that particular brand of lungi, and finally he forgets something and his wife reminds him, which looks really funny.

Some of the commercials telecast by BTV are several years old and need to be replaced and during full length Bengali feature film breaks, so many advertisements (some are repetitive) are shown that the interest in and continuity of the feature film is often lost, and the viewers rather start to curse the product instead of deciding to purchase it from the market. It seems, BTV must prepare an advertisement censor code which will deal with advertisements — their provocativeness, quality, length, excesses, absurdity, etc and then only would they have competitive, clean commercials pleasing to tele-viewers.

It is high time BTV should do something on musics which are played with feelers. They are very old and at times get bogged down as a gramophone record slows down drifting away from the normal speed (RPM). We have good musicians in our country. BTV can make use of their services and talents in producing Bengali folk tune music and playing them with the feelers.

Children, I feel, are deprived to a good extent of entertainment from BTV. In absence of external entertainment for children such as adequate recreational and amusement parks, they have no choice but to rely heavily on indoor entertainment. More cartoon films of various cartoon characters available in the world market should be imported and shown on BTV. More quiz programmes and informative documentary films can be telecast to raise their intellectual capabilities.

The Friday Movie of the Week Iranian feature film "The Ship of Angelica" was set during the time the British were occupying Iran. The film was shot on location, near the Persian Gulf. The bright sunshine and the blue water of the Persian Gulf matched it making the film very colourful and the viewers must have felt better watching film and imagining taking a dip in the cool waters when the country's mercury level went soaring, and humidity made one precipitate.

The hero of the film Entezam is himself a veteran film-maker. At a time during Shah's era when producers were making commercial films full of sex, vulgarity and violence, he produced and acted in art films. His award winning film "The Cow", released in the early seventies, was shown all over the world.

The "Fifth Pillar of Islam" was an excellent documentary film telecast by BTV with details of the holy places and historical background information. More of such programmes and specific instructions for the Hajis are required to be telecast prior to their departure for pilgrimage.

Film serials need to be organized properly because it seems that often episodes are not maintained serially as it was noticed on Friday last. In the American film "Major Dad" the hero was shown to get

married but the week before he was shown already married to the same girl.

Two dramas were telecast by BTV during the week. The first one, the weekly drama, was "Didi" written by the famous poet Rabindranath Tagore. The story dealt with a lady (Ferdowsi Muzumder) obsessed by her love and devotion for her baby brother, who was left with property in his name, when her parents died.

This obsession leads to conflicts with her husband (Mustafa) which leads to separation and the husband lays claims to his brother-in-law's property. Ferdowsi and Mustafa both have acted well, but perhaps more of Rabindra Sangeet was required in the drama since the story was written by the poet himself.

The serial Tathapi was telecast by BTV on Tuesday. It had actor "Azizul Hakim" who fell into a trap in his office and was required to pay ninety thousand Taka within fifteen days or go to jail. He joins the smugglers gang to get the money. Another character, played by Utpal, gets killed as he could not get the gold from abroad past the honest watchful eyes of the Customs officer (Aly Zaker) and his ever vigilant staff at Dhaka Airport. Yet another character (Tariq Anam) comes into the scene and arranges to smuggle gold adopting different means, this time by concealing the gold inside the stomachs of smugglers. But once it's detected. Meanwhile, somewhere abroad a lady's (Dolly Zohur) suitcase is replaced, without her knowledge, with the one with gold bars in it. Aly Zaker is informed by a colleague of Dolly.

After her arrival at Dhaka airport gold bars are detected and Aly Zaker, feeling very uncomfortable, orders the arrest of Dolly. The serial take a dramatic turn, the Customs officer is torn between duty and love. Let us wait and see if, in the next episode, Dolly's jealous colleague comes to her rescue because it seems he is the only one who has witnessed the replacement of the suitcase.

The concept of happiness is also an idea. It has also got its own evolutionary process at work.

H G Wells said: The story of man's progress towards civilization can be divided into two periods, namely, the period prior to the writing of the book, Advancement of learning by Francis Bacon, and after. This was done during the 17th century. European Renaissance rescued man from nazism.

Nevertheless, man did not know himself quite well as late as 1940 when Alexis Carrel wrote his book, Man, the Unknown. His contention was: Man had no opportunity to know himself as he devoted most of his time to know the external world. That is why. Psychology became the latest branch of science. Practically, since 1920, psychology became a science and during the past 70 years, it has made tremendous progress. It is well known that S Freud is the father of modern psychology but his sex theory, like that of Marxian economic theory based on class concept, was only partially true. Man was not born with hammer and sickle in hand to justify the history of civilization as the history of class struggle.

Survey of the human mentality all over this planet is possible with computer. Analysis of those findings can

assemble all facts on all aspects of human science. The scientists are, of course, not wasting time. They are not sitting idle. The irony is that their findings are not properly disseminated amongst the entire population on the global surface. Mental development of mankind is not uniform. There is a time lag between progress and social acceptance and one need not go far to seek such an evidence.

In Bangladesh this difference can be noted everywhere.

Although happiness is a personal concept, total human society and total ecosystem must be taken in to consideration to ensure happiness for mankind.

Happiness is a relative term; whether we notice or not every thing in existence is in constant change. Happiness and unhappiness may change from time to time. There is nothing absolute in life or nature. Every living organism is constantly striving for survival. Man is always striving for happiness but the circumstances may not favour him all the time nor every body can be equally fortunate. Taking all factors into consideration, one can conclude that the conquest of happiness is possible by constant striving and appropriate use of the will power to make the self and the society happy by means available within human resources.

# The Quest for Happiness

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stronger the will power, the surer is the road to success. The more assured is he success, the more assured is the happiness, in simple understanding, the fulfillment of a desire makes a person happy.

Today, it is established that what man can perceive, he can achieve. That is how he is flying so freely in the sky. The point made in this discussion is that achievement makes a man Happy. This achievement may be confined to the procurement of food stuff that ensures nutrition. Nutrition is the pre-requisite for maintenance of health. Health has been defined as the well-being of an organism — physical, mental and spiritual. Unless this trilogy is fulfilled, happiness recedes like a mirage.

Poverty is an all pervasive word. It is not confined merely to economic or financial poverty. It can be extended to mean poverty of knowledge, truth and philosophy. Truth is the content of knowledge; persons poor in knowledge suffer from the poverty of truth and as such may live in own paradise of ignorance in a miserably unsatisfied condition. In the last analysis, it has been found that the source of all unhappiness is ignorance. The

treatment of ignorance is knowledge. Knowledge means correct conception of an object. Correct conception can be achieved only by applying correct methodology of study. But all so called education do not impart correct knowledge. Wrong knowledge leads to wrong conception about truth. Wrong conception of truth leads to wrong judgement. Wrong judgement leads to wrong service. Wrong service leads to unsatisfactory outcome an unhappiness. Therefore, happiness is related to truth. Truth is related to goodness; goodness is related to love. Love is related to the conception of Beauty.

A person finds himself in a very complicated position in his quest for happiness. H G Wells implied his Economic Interpretation of history, unlike Karl Marx, in the title of his book "Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind." The simple equation is work brings wealth and wealth brings happiness. Of course, wealth is necessary for happiness and work is necessary for wealth. But precondition for work is knowledge and wealth. One must possess his health to do it. It is a process of co-relation of various factors inherent in

the process of evolution of the human society.

The mystery of missing link being solved, man is described as a rational animal. If the word rational is withdrawn man is an animal and that is the biological truth. But man has tried to run away from his shadow in the past while the law of physics confirm that no one can run away from his shadow. Arbitrarily, the first man in said to be the last monkey who could use a tool (a stone or a stick) to get a fruit down from the tree without climbing it. That is the greatest revolution that gave birth to the Homo Sapiens but it took place in the form of evolution. A monkey cannot be a man because the forebrain of the monkey did not develop the extra-cells to articulate the idea to pick up a stone or stick and aim it towards the desired fruit.

Other distinctive features of man is well known. The period spent by man in jungle before domestication is not known. Definitely, the savage period of human life had been of much longer duration. Man had to take one step at a time to come to the present stage of mental development and implementation of own ideas.